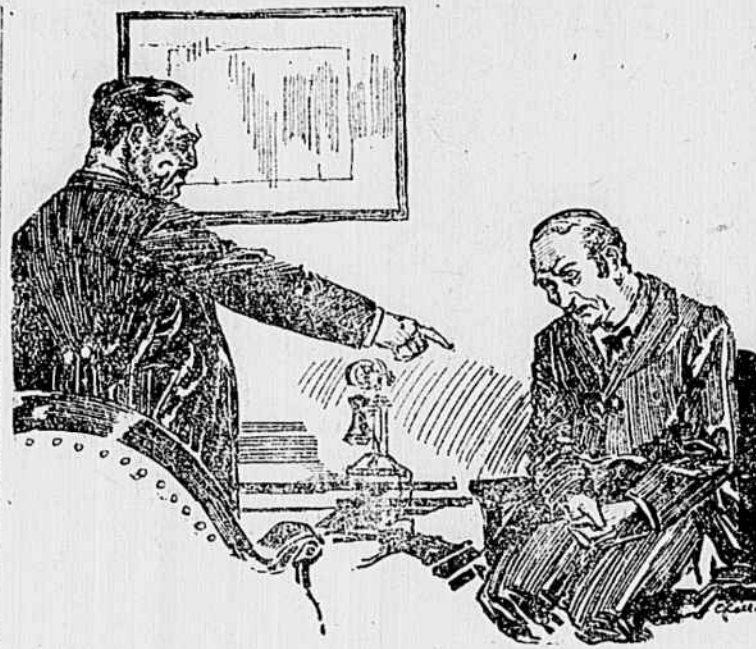


UNSEEN HANDS

By Robert Orr Chipperfield

A Bewildering Detective Story

(Copyright, 1920, by Public Ledger Co.)
(Copyright, 1920, Robert M. McBride & Co.)



"How did you know, sir?" Peter's jaw dropped.

rather do a stretch than go to the chair."

The older man could speak the door leading into the shop opened, and Gene appeared.

"We're caught," he cried wildly. "Either Sims or I must have been followed. Farley! There's a man walking up and down in front of the shop."

"Shut that door, you—n fool!" Farley drew finished up with a ferocious oath, but the other, whom Gene had called Sims, shouldered the young man aside and sprang through the door into the shop, while Drew himself strode over to the window.

Ozell and Porter had barely time to conceal themselves behind the pickle tubs which Miller had mentioned when the shade was pulled up, the window opened, and the sleek head of Farley Drew appeared cautiously reconnoitering.

"Nobody here," he heard without and the window slammed. Ozell reached his point of vantage once more in time to see Sims re-enter, closing the connecting door carefully behind him.

"Is the bull who came to your rooms an hour or so ago looking for you?" The valet's tone was high and quavering, and his face expressed abject fright. "He couldn't have followed me here, for I made sure that no one was behind me when I ducked into the alley. I tell you, they're on to us and the game is up!"

"I had a narrow squeak, I can tell you. That was Sims, Farley Drew's valet!"

"What have you been doing all this time?" Ozell demanded. "Does that alley extend through the block?"

"No. It ends in a blank wall midway, back of that butcher shop. I should say," Miller responded. "There are doors opening on it from all the rooms as far as it reaches, and window sashes, but the back room of the tailor's is the only one lighted up."

The door was locked and the window fastened and covered with a shade, but the glass in the lower sash of that window is broken by what looks like a bullet-hole, and the shade is ripped. I ought to have come back and reported at once, I suppose, but I had to answer some embarrassing questions what was going on in there. A young smooth-faced, blond-haired man was sitting at a table—I guessed that was your bird—and facing him was an older man, nearly forty, I judge, who looked like a dissipated swell."

"He talked so low that I couldn't hear what he said, but he seemed to be laying down the law to the kid, who was getting madder by the minute; and when he broke in he raised his voice so that I could hear every word. 'You can't bluff me with any more of that bunk, Drew,' he said. 'I know you can send me up, but you know it. You can bet your boots I kept your letters; they were the only protection I had! I was a sucker and you bled me white, but don't forget I've got a come-back! The other one growled something I couldn't hear, and then the kid broke in again. 'Not a chance! I don't know whether I got away with it tonight or not, but it's now or never. If you don't want this to be a matter of record, you'd better answer my questions you'll clear out until this thing is over. I tell you, I'll be back with that chap from headquarters as to how you stand in our family circle and I don't think the statement was a flattering one!'"

"I heard footsteps coming down the side street, and I ducked behind a pile of pickle tubs. The kid, the catless next door had stacked up in the alley; I was lucky I did, for a man passed twice on the sidewalk looking in and then turned and came straight toward me. I thought he'd seen me, but he went right up to the back door of the tailor's shop and knocked twice, and after a minute or more, the door opened, he and he went in, and I beat it back here to you."

"All right. Go over and watch the front door of the shop and if any one comes out stop them and blow your whistle. McCarron's on his beat and he'll be along here somewhere," Ozell turned to Porter. "Come on. We'll have a look at what is doing in that back room."

They crossed the avenue, entered the alley and crept to a position beneath the lighted window, where the detective straightened and peered through the ragged hole in the shade.

Only two men were visible in the room, the older man whom Miller had described and a stranger. The latter was postulating excitedly, and fragments of his speech reached Ozell's ears.

"I told him a week, sir. . . . Yes, he seemed to, but I can't tell about those bluffs. . . . But about this, sir. There's still difficulty about passports. . . . Oh, Honorable. Yes, I can get the baggage out providing they are not watching the place."

The older man leaned forward and spoke rapidly in an indistinguishable tone, and Ozell saw the other glance quickly toward the front of the shop and then back at the speaker with a look of horror on his face.

"Good God, no!" he cried; and the reference was gone from his tone. "I've helped in the other thing, and I'll admit that you've paid me well for it; but I wouldn't be a party to that for all the money in the world. . . . I don't care if it is;

gilded away into the shadows, reappeared at the lighted mouth of the alley, and vanished again in the wake of his subject.

Five more minutes passed, then ten, and still there came no sign of the departure of the third man from the lighted room. Ozell began to feel a vague sense of uneasiness. What if Drew had been a fool? He had indeed a guilty knowledge of the matter, but he was not a fool. No direct mention had been made by any of the three of the investigation going on at the Meade house nor of the sequence of strange events which had taken place there; but Gene Chalmers had had plenty of time to time to talk with Drew before the arrival of Sims. How completely the latter was in his master's confidence Ozell could not be sure. If Drew had indeed a guilty knowledge of the matter, he would not have been so glibly forthcoming. As I understand it, Mr. Lorne sent for you through the mediation of his attorney to look into the coincidence of the deaths and other recent accidents which have taken place in his home. That, of course, is no concern of mine, but if, in the pursuit of your investigation, you should encounter evidence of some—irregularity which had no possible bearing on your case, what would you do?"

"Irregularity," Ozell repeated. "Don't let us waste time by splitting hairs," Drew shrugged. "We will say rather that you might unearth a matter which would in no way interest the homicide department of your organization; a strictly family matter, the probing of which would cause only shame and unhappiness to people already burdened with grief and perplexity. Would you consider your duty without consulting the matter most immediately concerned to bring it to the attention of—another branch of the police service?"

"If I discovered evidence of another and separate crime unconnected with the matter now under investigation," the detective paused in seeming reflection. "That is rather a complex question, Mr. Drew. I fancy it would depend largely upon the nature of the crime and who ultimately benefited therefrom."

Farley Drew's eyes narrowed, but his tone was still that of one propounding an abstruse and impersonal argument.

"If the crime, as you call it, were for gain and happened to be committed by a member of the family, it would be reasonable to suppose that the guilty person would be one to profit ultimately, would it not?"

"Ultimately, perhaps, but not necessarily directly." A quick flash of memory had recalled the note which Ozell himself had laid before his chief an hour before, and with it a sudden inkling of the possible truth had come. "If some member of the family were placed in a compromising position by an outsider and forced into crime for the immediate gain, that outsider, in order to gain immunity for himself, it would cease to be a purely family matter, and its investigation would very likely bring shame and unhappiness and possibly incarceration to the instigator. Are you entirely disinterested in this theoretical discussion, Mr. Drew?"

He smiled steadily into the dark, smoldering eyes across the table, and Drew forced a sickly grimace in return, but the fingers holding his cigar twitched murderously.

"Quite," his voice was curiously even. "I confess I am disappointed in you, sergeant; I had taken you to be a man of independent thought and action, not hidebound like the majority of your conferees. I have been speaking from a purely altruistic point of view. I wished to spare a heartbroken and pained family from further pain, and to save one young person from an unmerited punishment."

"And in saving the family from further annoyance incidentally protect the real criminal, who had used a mere tool from the consequences of what he himself had instigated?" Ozell laughed in the other's lowering face. "Let him go scot free with the extortion he had practiced upon one member of the family in order to keep from the rest a knowledge of the truth? You are not serious, Mr. Drew. The young person may be in too deep, as it was meant he should be, for him to extricate himself; but if the matter is not exposed he may be in considerably deeper before he is through. Even if the affair did not come within the bounds of from the consequences of what I think that I should find myself compelled to take a hand."

For a moment there was silence

bookcase which flanked the cracked, imitation-marble mantel were of cheap, highly polished light oak, as were the center table and chairs. A wide, comfortable-looking couch stood against the opposite wall, and from behind the half-drawn curtain in the corner the end of a small gas stove was visible, with pots and pans hanging beneath a shelf upon which china and canned goods were stacked indiscriminately.

Evidently this room was more than a rendezvous; it was a complete apartment in itself in which one could live indefinitely without aid or interference from the outside world.

"Of course this is not the Bellemonte Annex," Drew remarked with an ironically deprecatory air, as if reading the other's thoughts. "It has its uses, however. Sit down, sergeant. Will you smoke?"

Ozell shook his head, but pulled a chair up to the table and seated himself. Drew had assumed the upper hand in opening the interview, and the detective was well content to leave the situation for the time being in the other's control. He was curious to learn the motive back of his host's attitude. Drew had spoken of a "mutually satisfactory understanding." That could only mean a bargain, a compromise or attempted bribery. Ozell believed the man before him to be too clever an essay for the latter; yet what compromise could he hope to effect with the police. The very fact that he sought to establish one told against him in the present situation, as he must realize.

Drew, meanwhile, had taken a box of cigars from a drawer of the sideboard, selected one, and lit it leisurely before he strolled over to the chair across the table from his guest and seated himself.

Ozell looked up and waited for him to speak.

"Sergeant," he began at length, with a speculative eye on the glow in the tip of his cigar. "From what my young friend, Gene Chalmers, has told me tonight, I believe you to be a man of not only common sense but intelligence; if I did not, I should not have sought this interview. As I understand it, Mr. Lorne sent for you through the mediation of his attorney to look into the coincidence of the deaths and other recent accidents which have taken place in his home. That, of course, is no concern of mine, but if, in the pursuit of your investigation, you should encounter evidence of some—irregularity which had no possible bearing on your case, what would you do?"

"Irregularity," Ozell repeated. "Don't let us waste time by splitting hairs," Drew shrugged. "We will say rather that you might unearth a matter which would in no way interest the homicide department of your organization; a strictly family matter, the probing of which would cause only shame and unhappiness to people already burdened with grief and perplexity. Would you consider your duty without consulting the matter most immediately concerned to bring it to the attention of—another branch of the police service?"

"If I discovered evidence of another and separate crime unconnected with the matter now under investigation," the detective paused in seeming reflection. "That is rather a complex question, Mr. Drew. I fancy it would depend largely upon the nature of the crime and who ultimately benefited therefrom."

Farley Drew's eyes narrowed, but his tone was still that of one propounding an abstruse and impersonal argument.

"If the crime, as you call it, were for gain and happened to be committed by a member of the family, it would be reasonable to suppose that the guilty person would be one to profit ultimately, would it not?"

"Ultimately, perhaps, but not necessarily directly." A quick flash of memory had recalled the note which Ozell himself had laid before his chief an hour before, and with it a sudden inkling of the possible truth had come. "If some member of the family were placed in a compromising position by an outsider and forced into crime for the immediate gain, that outsider, in order to gain immunity for himself, it would cease to be a purely family matter, and its investigation would very likely bring shame and unhappiness and possibly incarceration to the instigator. Are you entirely disinterested in this theoretical discussion, Mr. Drew?"

He smiled steadily into the dark, smoldering eyes across the table, and Drew forced a sickly grimace in return, but the fingers holding his cigar twitched murderously.

"Quite," his voice was curiously even. "I confess I am disappointed in you, sergeant; I had taken you to be a man of independent thought and action, not hidebound like the majority of your conferees. I have been speaking from a purely altruistic point of view. I wished to spare a heartbroken and pained family from further pain, and to save one young person from an unmerited punishment."

"And in saving the family from further annoyance incidentally protect the real criminal, who had used a mere tool from the consequences of what he himself had instigated?" Ozell laughed in the other's lowering face. "Let him go scot free with the extortion he had practiced upon one member of the family in order to keep from the rest a knowledge of the truth? You are not serious, Mr. Drew. The young person may be in too deep, as it was meant he should be, for him to extricate himself; but if the matter is not exposed he may be in considerably deeper before he is through. Even if the affair did not come within the bounds of from the consequences of what I think that I should find myself compelled to take a hand."

For a moment there was silence

bookcase which flanked the cracked, imitation-marble mantel were of cheap, highly polished light oak, as were the center table and chairs. A wide, comfortable-looking couch stood against the opposite wall, and from behind the half-drawn curtain in the corner the end of a small gas stove was visible, with pots and pans hanging beneath a shelf upon which china and canned goods were stacked indiscriminately.

Evidently this room was more than a rendezvous; it was a complete apartment in itself in which one could live indefinitely without aid or interference from the outside world.

"Of course this is not the Bellemonte Annex," Drew remarked with an ironically deprecatory air, as if reading the other's thoughts. "It has its uses, however. Sit down, sergeant. Will you smoke?"

Ozell shook his head, but pulled a chair up to the table and seated himself. Drew had assumed the upper hand in opening the interview, and the detective was well content to leave the situation for the time being in the other's control. He was curious to learn the motive back of his host's attitude. Drew had spoken of a "mutually satisfactory understanding." That could only mean a bargain, a compromise or attempted bribery. Ozell believed the man before him to be too clever an essay for the latter; yet what compromise could he hope to effect with the police. The very fact that he sought to establish one told against him in the present situation, as he must realize.

Drew, meanwhile, had taken a box of cigars from a drawer of the sideboard, selected one, and lit it leisurely before he strolled over to the chair across the table from his guest and seated himself.

Ozell looked up and waited for him to speak.

"Sergeant," he began at length, with a speculative eye on the glow in the tip of his cigar. "From what my young friend, Gene Chalmers, has told me tonight, I believe you to be a man of not only common sense but intelligence; if I did not, I should not have sought this interview. As I understand it, Mr. Lorne sent for you through the mediation of his attorney to look into the coincidence of the deaths and other recent accidents which have taken place in his home. That, of course, is no concern of mine, but if, in the pursuit of your investigation, you should encounter evidence of some—irregularity which had no possible bearing on your case, what would you do?"

"Irregularity," Ozell repeated. "Don't let us waste time by splitting hairs," Drew shrugged. "We will say rather that you might unearth a matter which would in no way interest the homicide department of your organization; a strictly family matter, the probing of which would cause only shame and unhappiness to people already burdened with grief and perplexity. Would you consider your duty without consulting the matter most immediately concerned to bring it to the attention of—another branch of the police service?"

"If I discovered evidence of another and separate crime unconnected with the matter now under investigation," the detective paused in seeming reflection. "That is rather a complex question, Mr. Drew. I fancy it would depend largely upon the nature of the crime and who ultimately benefited therefrom."

Farley Drew's eyes narrowed, but his tone was still that of one propounding an abstruse and impersonal argument.

"If the crime, as you call it, were for gain and happened to be committed by a member of the family, it would be reasonable to suppose that the guilty person would be one to profit ultimately, would it not?"

"Ultimately, perhaps, but not necessarily directly." A quick flash of memory had recalled the note which Ozell himself had laid before his chief an hour before, and with it a sudden inkling of the possible truth had come. "If some member of the family were placed in a compromising position by an outsider and forced into crime for the immediate gain, that outsider, in order to gain immunity for himself, it would cease to be a purely family matter, and its investigation would very likely bring shame and unhappiness and possibly incarceration to the instigator. Are you entirely disinterested in this theoretical discussion, Mr. Drew?"

He smiled steadily into the dark, smoldering eyes across the table, and Drew forced a sickly grimace in return, but the fingers holding his cigar twitched murderously.

"Quite," his voice was curiously even. "I confess I am disappointed in you, sergeant; I had taken you to be a man of independent thought and action, not hidebound like the majority of your conferees. I have been speaking from a purely altruistic point of view. I wished to spare a heartbroken and pained family from further pain, and to save one young person from an unmerited punishment."

"And in saving the family from further annoyance incidentally protect the real criminal, who had used a mere tool from the consequences of what he himself had instigated?" Ozell laughed in the other's lowering face. "Let him go scot free with the extortion he had practiced upon one member of the family in order to keep from the rest a knowledge of the truth? You are not serious, Mr. Drew. The young person may be in too deep, as it was meant he should be, for him to extricate himself; but if the matter is not exposed he may be in considerably deeper before he is through. Even if the affair did not come within the bounds of from the consequences of what I think that I should find myself compelled to take a hand."

For a moment there was silence

bookcase which flanked the cracked, imitation-marble mantel were of cheap, highly polished light oak, as were the center table and chairs. A wide, comfortable-looking couch stood against the opposite wall, and from behind the half-drawn curtain in the corner the end of a small gas stove was visible, with pots and pans hanging beneath a shelf upon which china and canned goods were stacked indiscriminately.

Evidently this room was more than a rendezvous; it was a complete apartment in itself in which one could live indefinitely without aid or interference from the outside world.

"Of course this is not the Bellemonte Annex," Drew remarked with an ironically deprecatory air, as if reading the other's thoughts. "It has its uses, however. Sit down, sergeant. Will you smoke?"

Ozell shook his head, but pulled a chair up to the table and seated himself. Drew had assumed the upper hand in opening the interview, and the detective was well content to leave the situation for the time being in the other's control. He was curious to learn the motive back of his host's attitude. Drew had spoken of a "mutually satisfactory understanding." That could only mean a bargain, a compromise or attempted bribery. Ozell believed the man before him to be too clever an essay for the latter; yet what compromise could he hope to effect with the police. The very fact that he sought to establish one told against him in the present situation, as he must realize.

Drew, meanwhile, had taken a box of cigars from a drawer of the sideboard, selected one, and lit it leisurely before he strolled over to the chair across the table from his guest and seated himself.

Ozell looked up and waited for him to speak.

"Sergeant," he began at length, with a speculative eye on the glow in the tip of his cigar. "From what my young friend, Gene Chalmers, has told me tonight, I believe you to be a man of not only common sense but intelligence; if I did not, I should not have sought this interview. As I understand it, Mr. Lorne sent for you through the mediation of his attorney to look into the coincidence of the deaths and other recent accidents which have taken place in his home. That, of course, is no concern of mine, but if, in the pursuit of your investigation, you should encounter evidence of some—irregularity which had no possible bearing on your case, what would you do?"

"Irregularity," Ozell repeated. "Don't let us waste time by splitting hairs," Drew shrugged. "We will say rather that you might unearth a matter which would in no way interest the homicide department of your organization; a strictly family matter, the probing of which would cause only shame and unhappiness to people already burdened with grief and perplexity. Would you consider your duty without consulting the matter most immediately concerned to bring it to the attention of—another branch of the police service?"

"If I discovered evidence of another and separate crime unconnected with the matter now under investigation," the detective paused in seeming reflection. "That is rather a complex question, Mr. Drew. I fancy it would depend largely upon the nature of the crime and who ultimately benefited therefrom."

Farley Drew's eyes narrowed, but his tone was still that of one propounding an abstruse and impersonal argument.

"If the crime, as you call it, were for gain and happened to be committed by a member of the family, it would be reasonable to suppose that the guilty person would be one to profit ultimately, would it not?"

"Ultimately, perhaps, but not necessarily directly." A quick flash of memory had recalled the note which Ozell himself had laid before his chief an hour before, and with it a sudden inkling of the possible truth had come. "If some member of the family were placed in a compromising position by an outsider and forced into crime for the immediate gain, that outsider, in order to gain immunity for himself, it would cease to be a purely family matter, and its investigation would very likely bring shame and unhappiness and possibly incarceration to the instigator. Are you entirely disinterested in this theoretical discussion, Mr. Drew?"

He smiled steadily into the dark, smoldering eyes across the table, and Drew forced a sickly grimace in return, but the fingers holding his cigar twitched murderously.

"Quite," his voice was curiously even. "I confess I am disappointed in you, sergeant; I had taken you to be a man of independent thought and action, not hidebound like the majority of your conferees. I have been speaking from a purely altruistic point of view. I wished to spare a heartbroken and pained family from further pain, and to save one young person from an unmerited punishment."

"And in saving the family from further annoyance incidentally protect the real criminal, who had used a mere tool from the consequences of what he himself had instigated?" Ozell laughed in the other's lowering face. "Let him go scot free with the extortion he had practiced upon one member of the family in order to keep from the rest a knowledge of the truth? You are not serious, Mr. Drew. The young person may be in too deep, as it was meant he should be, for him to extricate himself; but if the matter is not exposed he may be in considerably deeper before he is through. Even if the affair did not come within the bounds of from the consequences of what I think that I should find myself compelled to take a hand."



His unexpected host threw wide the door and stepped back for Ozell to enter.

derstood that Drew would not be back for a week."

"Is that all you got?" the chief asked disgustedly.

"Not quite, sir. By luck I found the chauffeur outside at the taxi stand who had driven him to the station—the Grand Central it was. He knew Drew and had often driven him before, and he said that he was in a devil of a hurry to catch his train this morning. It looked straight enough to me."

"All right; that'll do." As the door closed once more the chief turned to Ozell. "It seems as though you had the right door, Drew must have had word from that Chalmers lad and beaten it, and that adds more color to your theory. If he isn't mixed up in this thing he would have stuck around and played the friend of the family and braved it out."

Ozell rose.

"I've got to get a line on him and I won't call it a day until I have," he announced. "It's only 10 o'clock. We'll go back to the Meade house and have it out with Gene."

He had started for the door when the telephone on the captain's desk whirled and instinctively he waited.

"Yes—Who?—Oh, it's you, is it, Porter? . . . The sergeant? Yes, he's here."

Ozell sprang forward and seized the receiver.

"Hello, Porter. Where are you phoning from?"

"Is that you, sergeant?" Porter fairly yelled with excitement. "I'm talking from the booth in Volkert's drug store over on Third Avenue; you know the place, we had him up a couple of months ago for selling 'snow.'"

"What are you doing there?" demanded the exasperated Ozell. "I left you to watch Gene Chalmers. The last I heard of you you were playing cards with him."

"Yes, and he hooked me," Porter retorted. "I'm trailing him now. He's across the street in a tailor's shop next the corner; it was all closed and dark, but he let himself in with a key."

"Keep your eye on that shop till I get there," ordered Ozell. "If he comes out shadow him, but phone back here to headquarters the first chance you get so that I can follow you. Get me?"

"Sure, sergeant."

There came the almost simultaneous click of two receivers, and Ozell turned to his chief.

"I can't have Miller! I've a hunch we'll need him; Gene Chalmers thinks he's given Porter the slip, and he's over on Third Avenue in some joint that has a shop in front for a blind. I rather think there will be developments."

With the readily accepted permission he and Miller dashed swiftly upon, dismissing the car a block from their destination. Most of the shops were closed; but the avenue was still brightly lighted, and as they approached the drug store they could distinguish Porter's short, stocky figure leaning nonchalantly against the lamppost at the curb.

As they neared him he turned and greeted them boisterously in the tongue language of the quarter for the benefit of any chance passer-by, then drew them around the corner.

"Look back over your shoulder," he said in low, hurried tones. "See that shop between the delicatessen and the tobacconists? That's the joint, Gene Chalmers hasn't come out yet and no one else has gone in; but it must be some sort of a meeting place."

"What is that narrow open space around the corner on the side street, back of the tobacconists?" Ozell queried. "Looks like a sort of alley to me. Miller, go and see if it runs back of the tailor's shop and if there is a door opening on it. Look for any lights in the rear and be careful if there is any one hanging about."

As Miller nodded to them carelessly and sauntered across the avenue, Porter observed with grudging admiration in his tones:

"I thought that Gene was just a Willie-boy, but I had the wrong dope; he's about as slick as they come. I thought at first that he was too blatted affable when he invited me into his room; but he seemed so anxious to tell me all about how that picture nearly fell on him the night before and ready to offer a hundred different suggestions that he threw me off the track; and boy! how he can play cards! Not that I took my hand off my number for a minute until just at the last," he added hastily. "But you yourself might have been taken in by the way he worked that, sergeant."

"Possibly," Ozell assented dryly. "I tried to get word to you before I left the house to warn you against that very thing; but you didn't come down to report and I let you alone to handle the case your own way. How did he manage to give you the slip?"

"It was after dinner and he wanted a drink; said that his stepfather had some private stock locked away in a cellar, but he had a duplicate key which the old man had given him. I had my suspicions as to how he had come by that key; but it was none of my business, so I went down cellar with him. There were stone steps and a flat door bolted on the inside leading up into the back yard, and a small room partitioned off, where he said the liquor was stored."

"He turned on the electric light by a switch in the wall near the staircase, took a key from his pocket and opened the door of the storeroom. I strolled after him to take a peep inside when he called to me to look on one of the hanging shelves that were full of preserve jars and find a glass." Porter hesitated. "I suppose I was a fool, but I never allowed he had a chance in the world to make a break for it; then, so I turned to do as he asked, when the lights went out like a flash and

"I heard the door of the storeroom slam. I groped my way to it, but it fastened by a spring lock and by the time I found the switch in the wall and turned on the lights again Shaw blew his whistle outside."

"There must have been a second light switch in the storeroom and a second door leading up into the yard; and the kid had evidently planned his getaway ahead, for he's wearing a cloth cap, which I guess he had been carrying folded up in an inside pocket since before I came on the job. I ran out of the house, found Blake on guard at the corner, and he told me young Chalmers had come out of the tradesmen's entrance on the side street and started due east, with Shaw trailing him."

"I borrowed Blake's hat and hot-footed it after them, picking up at Third Avenue in time to relieve Shaw just as Gene was boarding a surface car by sheer luck, a drunk happened to getting out of a taxi in front of Bad Westley's old bedroom, and I grabbed it and trailed the kid. The kid couldn't have had a suspicion that he was being shadowed; for he got out at that corner and made straight for that shop over there without even looking around."

"You were an ass to be taken in like that, Porter, but perhaps it is just as well," Ozell commented. "Our young friend must have been pretty desperate to risk such a move, when he knew that the house was guarded inside and out. I wonder why Miller hasn't come back? It doesn't look good to me."

"Look!" Porter exclaimed, touching his superior's arm. "That man, he has walked twice past the mouth of that alley; there he goes in! Think we had better trail along!"

"No. Give me a chance. If he gets in any trouble he'll blow his whistle."

For a few minutes longer they waited in silence, and at length Miller appeared from the shadows of the alleyway and hastened across the alleyway towards them.

"Did you see that man?" he asked. "I had a narrow squeak, I can tell you. That was Sims, Farley Drew's valet!"

"What have you been doing all this time?" Ozell demanded. "Does that alley extend through the block?"

"No. It ends in a blank wall midway, back of that butcher shop. I should say," Miller responded. "There are doors opening on it from all the rooms as far as it reaches, and window sashes, but the back room of the tailor's is the only one lighted up."

The door was locked and the window fastened and covered with a shade, but the glass in the lower sash of that window is broken by what looks like a bullet-hole, and the shade is ripped. I ought to have come back and reported at once, I suppose, but I had to answer some embarrassing questions what was going on in there. A young smooth-faced, blond-haired man was sitting at a table—I guessed that was your bird—and facing him was an older man, nearly forty, I judge, who looked like a dissipated swell."

"He talked so low that I couldn't hear what he said, but he seemed to be laying down the law to the kid, who was getting madder by the minute; and when he broke in he raised his voice so that I could hear every word. 'You can't bluff me with any more of that bunk, Drew,' he said. 'I know you can send me up, but you know it. You can bet your boots I kept your letters; they were the only protection I had! I was a sucker and you bled me white, but don't forget I've got a come-back! The other one growled something I couldn't hear, and then the kid broke in again. 'Not a chance! I don't know whether I got away with it tonight or not, but it's now or never. If you don't want this to be a matter of record, you'd better answer my questions you'll clear out until this thing is over. I tell you, I'll be back with that chap from headquarters as to how you stand in our family circle and I don't think the statement was a flattering one!'"

"I heard footsteps coming down the side street, and I ducked behind a pile of pickle tubs. The kid, the catless next door had stacked up in the alley; I was lucky I did, for a man passed twice on the sidewalk looking in and